

CLAIMS

I Claim

1. A guidewire for guiding an irrigating tube into and through a body cavity, comprising:
 - 5 an elongate, resilient shaft adapted to pass in an interior of or along the irrigating tube; and
 - a bulbous enlargement arranged at a distal end of said shaft, said bulbous enlargement having a smooth, arcuate outer surface.
2. The guidewire of claim 1, wherein said bulbous enlargement is spherical.
- 10 3. The guidewire of claim 1, wherein said bulbous enlargement has a diameter of about 0.25 inches to about 0.75 inches.
4. The guidewire of claim 1, where said shaft is formed such that a portion of said shaft attached to said bulbous enlargement is more flexible than the remainder of said shaft.
- 15 5. The guidewire of claim 1, wherein said shaft is tapered such that an end attached to said bulbous enlargement has a smaller cross-section than an end distant from said bulbous enlargement.
6. The guidewire of claim 1, wherein said shaft comprises a central metal wire and a coil surrounding said central metal wire.
- 20 7. A method for irrigating a body cavity, comprising the steps of:
 - pushing a guidewire having a bulbous enlargement at a distal end into the body cavity; then
 - sliding an irrigating tube over or along the guidewire; and then
 - directing fluid through the irrigating tube.

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8. The method of claim 7, wherein the body cavity is the colon, the step of pushing the guidewire into the colon comprising the step of pushing the guidewire through the anal sphincter and rectum into the colon.

5 9. The method of claim 7, further comprising the step of providing the bulbous enlargement with a smooth outer arcuate surface such that when the guidewire is pushed into the body cavity, contact between the bulbous enlargement and a wall of the body cavity does not cause perforation of the wall of the body cavity.

10 10. The method of claim 7, further comprising the step of positioning the irrigating tube over the guidewire such that guidewire passes through an interior of the irrigating tube and the irrigating tube slides over the guidewire.

11. The method of claim 7, further comprising the step of guiding the guidewire through the body cavity by manipulating the bulbous enlargement.

12. The method of claim 7, further comprising the steps of:
grasping the bulbous enlargement when present in the body cavity; and then
15 pulling the guidewire outward from the body cavity to cause the body cavity to compress and shorten the distance between an entrance leading to the body cavity and a treatment site at which the bulbous enlargement is positioned.

13. The method of claim 7, further comprising the step of sizing the bulbous enlargement to have a diameter of about 0.25 inches to about 0.75 inches.

20 14. The method of claim 7, wherein the irrigating tube is slid over the guidewire, further comprising the steps of:

sizing the bulbous enlargement to have a diameter smaller than an inner diameter of the irrigating tube; and

25 withdrawing the guidewire from the irrigating tube after the irrigating tube is slid over the guidewire and before fluid is directed through the irrigating tube.

15. A colonic irrigation device, comprising:
a guidewire having a bulbous enlargement at a distal end, said guidewire being adapted to be guided into the colon;
an irrigating tube movable relative to and over or along said guidewire; and
5 means for providing a flow of fluid through said irrigating tube,
whereby said guidewire is guided into the colon and then said irrigating tube is moved over or along said guidewire into the colon.

16. The colonic irrigation device of claim 15, wherein said bulbous enlargement has a smooth, arcuate outer surface.

10 17. The colonic irrigation device of claim 15, wherein said bulbous enlargement is spherical.

18. The colonic irrigation device of claim 15, wherein said bulbous enlargement has a diameter of about 0.25 inches to about 0.75 inches.

15 19. The colonic irrigation device of claim 15, wherein said irrigating tube is movable over said guidewire, said bulbous enlargement having a diameter smaller than an inner diameter of said irrigating tube whereby said guidewire is removable from said irrigating tube after said irrigating tube has been slid over said guidewire and before fluid is directed through said irrigating tube.

20 20. The colonic irrigation device of claim 15, wherein said irrigating tube defines an interior, said guidewire being arranged at least partially in said interior of said irrigating tube such that said irrigating tube slides over said guidewire.

25 21. The colonic irrigation device of claim 15, wherein said guidewire includes a shaft attached at one end to said bulbous enlargement, said shaft being tapered such that the end attached to said bulbous enlargement has a smaller cross-section than an end distant from said bulbous enlargement.

22. The colonic irrigation device of claim 15, wherein said guidewire includes a shaft attached at one end to said bulbous enlargement, said shaft comprising a central metal wire and a coil surrounding said central metal wire.

23. In a body cavity irrigation device including an irrigating tube through which fluid is directed and a guidewire for guiding the irrigating tube into and through a body cavity, said guidewire including an elongate, resilient shaft adapted to pass in an interior of or along the irrigating tube, the improvement comprising:

said guidewire including a bulbous enlargement arranged at a distal end of said shaft, said bulbous enlargement having a smooth, arcuate outer surface.

24. The irrigation device of claim 23, wherein said bulbous enlargement is spherical.

25. The irrigation device of claim 23, wherein said bulbous enlargement has a diameter of about 0.25 inches to about 0.75 inches.

26. The irrigation device of claim 23, where said shaft is formed such that a portion of said shaft attached to said bulbous enlargement is more flexible than the remainder of said shaft.

27. The irrigation device of claim 23, wherein said shaft is tapered such that an end attached to said bulbous enlargement has a smaller cross-section than an end distant from said bulbous enlargement.

28. The irrigation device of claim 23, wherein said shaft comprises a central metal wire and a coil surrounding said central metal wire.